



GEOPOLITICS *versus* GEOLOGISTICS*

Lt. Col. Harry A. Sachaklian

PERHAPS the most striking manifestation of the growing consciousness of geography in the United States has been the acceptance of the word “geopolitics” into the modern lexicon.

Yet, a careful examination of the origin of the term, the uses to which it has been put, and the apparent impossibility of arriving at a satisfactory definition of this word, causes serious doubt as to its applicability to the conditions that face the world today. It would appear reasonable to assume that the usefulness of the term and the concept ended with the defeat of Hitler’s Germany.

Geopolitics is a word of German origin. It was conceived in the German language to reach a German audience and was dedicated to the proposition that Germany deserved more of the wealth of the world than it then possessed. It is an empty quibble to point out that Rudolf Kjellén, in whose writings the word first appeared, was a Swede. Lord Haw Haw was indisputably an Englishman but no one has yet suggested that his concepts were anything but German.

To emphasize further the German origin of the word, it must be understood that Kjellén coined the word *Geopolitik* in 1917 as one of a group of five such words. They were: *Geopolitik* (geography and the state), *Demopolitik* (population and the state), *Oekopolitik* (economic resources of the state), *Sociopolitik* (social structure of the state), and *Kratopolitik* (governmental organization).

The Germans, under the guidance of Haushofer, chose to consider *Geopolitik* as being all-encompassing and they virtually ig-

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nored the other classifications. It is a matter of record that Kjellén was a little disturbed at this partial acceptance of his concepts, but since his concepts found favor only in Germany, he had little further influence on subsequent developments.

From the moment this word was seized by the Germans, it became the best descriptive term of the guiding philosophy of German neoimperialism. It was designed and developed as a guide to those statesmen and military men in whose hands the destiny of Germany rested. The connection between Haushofer and Hitler was close, enduring, and well publicized. The principal use of the term by the German state was to salve the conscience of the German people for murders, past, present and future. Its success as a conscience salve is measured by such institutions as Buchenwald. Its success as a concept is measured by the state of Germany today.

The term *Geopolitik* was not generally known in the United States until about 1937. At that time, American journalism learned about Haushofer and his *Institut fur Geopolitik*. With typical journalistic fervor and in true Sunday-supplement style, large segments of the American public were introduced to this mystic, geographic alchemy, this invincible blueprint for world conquest.

Despite the thoroughgoing criticism of *Geopolitik* by numerous American geographers, the war-induced hysteria caught on and a number of books were published explaining the principles of this new “science.” Certain educators and educational institutions responded to this stimulation and began teaching something called *geopolitics* in American universities.

AN EXAMINATION of the existing literature on geopolitics reveals certain significant things. In the first place, practically all American



books on the subject coincide in their condemnation of the German view of it and call the German view a perversion of geopolitics. In all honesty, it must be argued that the originators of a term or concept have the sole right to define and delimit the term or concept they originated. If American authorities refuse to accept the German definition of a German word, then they, the American authorities, are guilty of perversion if they continue to use the term or concept but ascribe a different meaning to it.

In the second place, the American authorities who choose to use the word are by no means agreed as to the different meaning or the variation from the original theme they believe is most applicable. Though there are as many different shades of interpretation as there are authorities on the subject, American use of the word, geopolitics, can be classified in general into three major groupings:

- a.* Approximately the German view, namely, geographical determinism, or as one German writer put it, “the geographical conscience of the state.”
- b.* A synonym for political geography.
- c.* A general term to indicate planning for national security.

With meanings as widely varied as those listed above, serious doubt is reflected on the value of the word itself. A word that has meaning only to the speaker is no better than gibberish. A word used as a synonym should clarify and not obfuscate.

In the third place, the mere examination of the dates of publication of American books on geopolitics indicates a remarkable coincidence. People simply stopped writing about geopolitics when Germany succumbed. Books on geopolitics reached their peak of profusion between 1942 and 1944 and then fell off sharply



to nothing. An intensive search for recent reference matter on the subject reveals that only two obscure articles in an obscure journal were written on geopolitics since 1945. Yet, the long established and respected fields of geography, political geography, economic geography and political science continue to exhibit healthy activity in research and discussion.

In the fourth place, all texts exhibit basic weaknesses by failure to incorporate adequately two prime factors, the effect of Air Power and the even greater effect of social, ethical and cultural values on geopolitical concepts.

The contradiction of Air Power to one of the basic themes of geopolitics, the heartland theory, was posed on the very day the heartland theory was announced. It was not adequately answered then and has not been adequately answered to this day.

The concepts of morality and culture have been opposed to deterministic theories since mankind emerged from the jungle. Geopolitics in some ways is a reaction against Marxism, but geopoliticians make the same mistakes as the Marxists. Instead of economics, space becomes the absolute yardstick. Geographical determinism is as void of moral evaluation and restraint as is economic determinism. Geopolitical materialism states that space and soil is the determining factor rather than any independent Man. This is as much as saying that mankind acts as does either the lemming of the frozen North, that responds to some mystic urge beyond its comprehension and dashes headlong into the sea, or the army ant of South America, that periodically gathers its fellows and sets off across country devouring everything in its path, again in response to some mystic urge beyond its comprehension.



In the fifth place, many of the American books on geopolitics, though vehement in the denial of determinism in geography, insist on perpetuating the myth that geopolitics is dynamic. This is an incredible contradiction, since if it is dynamic it must have momentum and if it has momentum it must be deterministic.

THERE ARE other things about geopolitics that make it even less desirable as a guide to the military and political leaders of the United States.

Geopolitics is essentially pessimistic. It assumes that the wealth of the world is limited to that which is now discovered and that peoples can acquire more wealth only by seizing wealth belonging to others. This is obviously as erroneous as the “Mature Economy” theory of the early New Dealers or the “Share the Wealth” doctrines of the Huey Long group.

Such concepts are not new and have been disproved time and again by visionaries who, looking into the future and finding it good, kept right on adding to the wealth of the world.

For example, geopolitics considers the world ocean either as a separation of land masses or as a connection between land masses but, in any event, not as a source of wealth except possibly for sea flora and fauna. Yet the ocean itself as well as the bottom of the ocean is an almost completely unexplored and unexploited source of wealth. Today, the extraction of magnesium from sea water is commonplace. Today, the oil resources of the continental shelf appear within reach. Who knows what else tomorrow?

Geopolitics is concerned only with the state. It assumes that the state is the beginning and the end of everything. It traces this



concept back to Aristotle, as if Aristotle were the beginning and end of all reasoning. Aristotle is quoted by geopoliticians as saying, “The state is natural to man, and man is by nature a member of the state.” From this hypothesis his reasoning progresses as follows: nature always works for the best; what is best, therefore, is the product of nature. The state, as a product of nature, is the *sum-mum bonum*, the best form of life to which man can aspire.

In the days of the Spanish Inquisition, it was worth a man’s life to quarrel with the doctrines of Aristotle. The best place for geopolitics would appear to be in a museum along with a bust of Aristotle and relics of the Spanish Inquisition, for both Aristotle and the geopoliticians completely ignore the fact that the state is a man-made institution and, as such, is equally subject to the imperfections of everything that is man-made. In ignoring the fact that the state is man-made, the geopoliticians overlook the possibility that man may change or even abandon that which he has made. Instead, the geopoliticians substitute the divine right of states for the long since exploded divine right of kings.

The German geopoliticians even went so far as to say that the state is a biological entity and, as such, is subject to Darwin’s laws. This is like saying that the Germans are a separate species and can not breed with other nationalities. The occupation armies in Germany are proving the fallacy of such belief, if proof is necessary.

Perhaps the most poisonous inconsistency of geopolitics is that it poses instability as the fundamental principle of international relations. It sees but one certainty, everlasting struggle, and urges states to seize what they can before some other state seizes them. When states carry out this recommendation they succeed only in verifying a hypothesis that otherwise is not necessarily true, for if



all states refused to respond to this urging, everlasting struggle no longer would appear certain.

In any event, if the everlasting struggle is for wealth, it should be apparent that the process of seizure consumes wealth rather than adding it. The net result of any aggression is to reduce the wealth of the world, since even the preparation for aggression diverts wealth. “Guns instead of butter,” the Germans said. They now have neither.

In the last analysis, geopolitics is nothing more nor less than a rationalization of why people must be killed, based on a reprehensible refusal to admit that people can be fed.

The quiescent and tacit acceptance of geopolitics on the part of the military services appears to be sciolism in its purest form. It is reminiscent of the fable of the king who hired two rascals to make him a suit of clothes so finely woven and so exquisite in texture that only an honest man could see it. According to the fable, these early-day confidence men extracted large quantities of valuables from the king and sat for days weaving imaginary cloth from imaginary thread. Naturally, neither the king nor his courtiers would admit to dishonesty by exposing their failure to see the beauty of the material. The author of this article hopes he is playing the role of the child who, on seeing the king at last dressed in his imaginary finery, said in a loud, clear voice, “But mother, the king has no clothes on at all!”

Part of the reason for the acceptance of the term geopolitics may be the lack of a better one. There appears to be a definite need for an all-encompassing term to describe the relationship of people and governments to environment. It is argued herein that geopolitics is not apt and does not fit for, among many others, the following reasons:



a. The originators of the term have the sole right to define the term they originated and their definition is largely unacceptable outside of Germany.

b. The term has been used as a justification for aggression.

c. The term ignores all ethical or moral values.

d. American use of the term is very loose and unscientific in that it does not mean the same thing to all people.

e. American use of the term appears to be rapidly dying out and if retained for use by the military would end up being a purely military term.

f. The entire concept is permeated through and through with assumptions that suit the purposes of bandits far better than civilized human beings.

THE ACCUMULATION and interpretation of geographical data for military, political, economic and social purposes are both valid and necessary. The term heretofore partly used to describe this process is subject to misinterpretation and obviously incapable of scientific definition. A new term seems to be required.

The term *geologistics* is offered. This word is derived from the Greek, *geo*, meaning the earth or pertaining to the earth, and *logistikos*, meaning calculation or accounting. Geologistics, then, would literally mean the calculation of the earth and its resources.

Geologistics could properly be defined as being an inclusive term used to describe the process of concentrating all knowledge for the purpose of utilizing the resources of the world for the welfare of mankind.



Geologistics would not necessarily be connected with states as such but would deal directly with the relationship of human beings to environment. Geologistics would thus avoid the intellectual pitfalls of geopolitics wherein German (or other) “scientists” can say, “geopolitical maxims are valid only if they operate in favor of the Reich (or other nation).”

There would appear to be three major phases of geologistics:

- a.* The identification of resources.
- b.* The inventory of resources.
- c.* The technique of placing resources in motion to attain human aims.

Identification of resources is the function of the research scientist. His work in the past fifty years in adding to the list of things that are of use to man is one of the most remarkable achievements in all history. Uranium, plutonium, radium, and the products of organic chemistry such as the various coal-tar derivatives and the range of products derived from cellulose, all add up to an imposing list. Yet, the most significant conclusion to be reached from this half-century of investigation is that the true value of the earth and its component materials is limited only by the ability of men to comprehend it.

Having determined that a substance is of value to mankind, the next logical step is the determination of where and in what quantities this substance exists. Even to this day, the world has never been adequately surveyed to determine the location and quantities of such widely recognized and utilized resources as iron and oil. In North America alone, huge areas remain comparatively unknown in respect to the mineral and other resources that may



exist. In recent years clues to the existence of tremendous quantities of oil have been discovered at the northern rim of the North American continent. In northern Labrador [*sic*], large deposits of high-grade iron ore have been discovered, with the true extent of the resources there yet to be determined. Recent newspaper accounts credit the Soviet Union with a plan to make a complete survey of their own natural resources. This is geologistics in action.

The third step, after identifying and locating resources, would be to place them in motion. Resources lying inert are not resources; they must be utilized. They must be utilized profitably or the system breaks down. Profit can be measured in terms of the value of resources expended to acquire the new resources. If expenditure exceeds return, obviously wealth has not been added to the sum total available to the world. All resources must be carefully utilized to avoid waste, since waste is an expenditure of resources without return and consequently the waster is depriving the world of wealth otherwise available to it.

Human resources are not always so highly prized as material resources. This is the gravest error of all, since human resources are the only ones capable of placing other resources in motion. It must be one of the prime functions of geologistics to point out that human resources are the most important of all, and that careful utilization of these resources is the paramount key in adding to the wealth of the world. Human life is the only resource that is beyond measurable value.

A geological study made on a world-wide basis would cast a new light on the attempts of states to achieve autarchy (economic self-sufficiency). It would indicate that no state, as presently constituted, can achieve meaningful autarchy without access to the



resources of other states. It would indicate that true world autarchy is unattainable without world domination by a single power, unless existing powers are able and willing to produce that which they are best qualified to produce and to forego production of items that are best produced elsewhere. It would indicate that existing powers might be willing to relinquish their dreams of complete autarchy if they knew for certain that they would not be deprived of essentials at the whim or prejudice of an alien state.

THE VALUE of geological study to the military and political leaders of the United States would be considerable.

If the world were studied as a logistical problem, conclusions would be reached that, in all probability, would vary considerably from a study of the world as a political problem. The difference is akin to the old intelligence admonition to study capabilities instead of intentions. The political steps a nation takes are strictly in the category of intentions and as such are transitory and eminently subject to change. The very fact that a nation has learned that its intentions are suspect can cause it to change its intentions. A changing national capability is as obvious as the rising and the setting of the sun to the trained observer.

The environmental and geographic factors that have a bearing on national logistics or national capability are fixed and firm and are capable of scientific measurement. Although national power, like individual power, is composed to a considerable degree of certain intangibles that do not lend themselves to statistical expression, there is an ultimate beyond which national effort cannot be exercised. The intangible factors mentioned before will determine not the ultimate, but how close to the ultimate the specific nation



can come. The requirement, when considering a rival nation, is to determine the ultimate and then base judgement on the assumption that the ultimate will be reached. In war, the requirement is to render the nation in question incapable of exercising to the utmost its latent or potential power. The requirement, when considering one's own nation, in peace or in war, is to determine how this ultimate can best be reached.

There would appear to be ten general categories of environmental and geographic factors that must be thoroughly studied before the ultimate expression of a nation's power can be assessed. They are: (1) The Land Mass, (2) Water Areas, (3) Climate, (4) Political, Economic and Social Organization, (5) Manpower Resources, (6) Agricultural and Forest Resources, (7) Mineral Resources, (8) Transportation Capabilities, (9) Fuel and Power, (10) Industrial Development.

By making such studies a basic part of military and political knowledge, the nation can best determine the course of action it must take to accomplish the aims of its people. This course of action by no means needs to be armed conflict. In fact, if such a study were made by the United States today, it would probably indicate that the aims of the people of the United States, including relative security, could best be accomplished by the better development and utilization of those resources now available to the United States. It might also indicate that certain resources not now available to the United States in sufficient quantities could probably be acquired at once, at the best possible terms.

Geologistics would teach that the most practical step a free people can take to increase its own security is to add to the wealth of the world. The farther away from stark hunger the world travels, the less attraction and control tyranny can have. Tyranny fears



prosperity, since hunger is its principal weapon. The best, the most practical kind of power politics for the modern world is to use power to create world prosperity. This means trading with and taking from the world. This means *quid pro quo*, something for something. Such is the essence of geologistics.

The need for another concept of the relationship of men to one another and to the world in which they live is more than urgent; it is the most important feature of modern times. World union of some form or another seems to be the alternative to eternal strife. Geopolitics produced a blueprint for world union by world conquest. It failed, as has every previous attempt to conquer the world.

Modern science has produced weapons and forces that might appear to make world conquest feasible. Yet, it is a basic law of physics that force creates counterforce. World conquest would be meaningless if the world conqueror had nothing but radioactive rubble over which to rule. Perhaps a study of geologistics will produce a practical road to world union based on something other than force and conquest.

Let us understand once and for all that the human will cannot be conquered by force and controlled in perpetuity by penalties and reprisals. The human will can be won only by sincere motivation and deep, spiritual perception. Deterministic theories cannot supply the necessary motivation and certainly lack the necessary perception.

The best answer to an idea is a better idea. The best answer to theory is demonstration. Germany has demonstrated that the concepts of geopolitics are truly the concepts of narrow-minded fatalists and offer nothing but more despair to a despairing world.



The world has demonstrated throughout its history that when hope fades, progress ceases. The United States has demonstrated that the concepts of geologistics are the concepts of hope and, in adhering to the concepts of hope, the United States can offer hope to the world.

Let us not abandon the concepts that have served us well. Instead, let us work to correct the lack of balance we find in our own society and, by so doing, demonstrate our continuing faith in our own concepts. If we look into the future with the intention of adding to the wealth of the world, we will find the future good.



Unless we maintain clearly adequate Air Power in being, no matter at what sacrifice of goods and treasure, all else may well be futile.

Major General Muir S. Fairchild,
in graduation address at the
Air University (4 June 1947)



Lt. Col. Harry A. Sachaklian, instructor in the Logistics Division of the Air Command and Staff School, graduate of the Army-Navy Staff College, was Air Logistics Member of the Joint Plans Staff, Allied Force Headquarters.

